



# Forest Service

## Mt. Ashland Ski Area Expansion

### Briefing Paper

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**Date:** July 21, 2010

**Topic:** Mt. Ashland Ski Area (MASA) Expansion, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest, Oregon

**Issue:** Ski Area Expansion within the McDonald Peak Inventoried Roadless Area.

**Key Points:**

- There will be a removal of 71 acres of trees, 40 acres of which are within the 9,425 acre McDonald Peak Inventoried Roadless Area
- The purpose for tree cutting is to create approximately 71 acres of associated new ski terrain, primarily within the western half of the MASA SUP area.
- The exemption within the RACR is 294.13(b)(2): the cutting and removal of timber is expected to be infrequent and is incidental to the implementation of a management activity.
- The cutting of timber is incidental to the expansion of the ski area and SUP implementation.
- Project design was shaped by resource considerations and ski area design needs. The IRA was acknowledged and consistency with roadless policy was analyzed and disclosed, but project design was not driven by the Roadless Area Conservation Rule.
- The Mt. Ashland Association leases the ski area from the City of Ashland, who has a Special Use Permit. The Forest Service “need” is “to respond to a proposal by MAA that would expand facilities within the designated Special Use Permit area. One purpose of the ski area expansion is to ensure the economic viability and longevity of this community-owned ski area, and to augment and modernize existing MASA facilities, thus ensuring the greatest possibility for an economically stable ski area with a competitive and quality recreation experience (no facilities will be developed with the IRA).

**Background:** The scoping process for the 1991 Master Plan FEIS began in October 1984. Public involvement continued for six years, through November 1990. In 1998, MAA submitted a proposal to implement a variety of improvements. This project has been extensively reported by the press. A DEIS comment period occurred in 2000; there was substantial public and agency comment which resulted in preparation of a new DEIS. That public comment period closed in late 2003. An Open House was held to facilitate public comment and to clarify the alternatives. A formal public hearing and four public field trips to the MASA were lead by FS personnel. Further field trips were also conducted for City of Ashland officials. City of Ashland staff and council members conducted one study session and two city council meetings devoted to the DEIS; public attendance at these meetings showed a high interest in issues associated with the proposed expansion of MASA. A total of 3,269 comments to the DEIS were received. A FEIS was issued in August 2004, with a ROD issued in September 2004. The FS received 28 notices of appeal to the ROD. In January, 2005, Oregon Natural Resources Council, the Sierra Club and Headwaters (collectively ONRC) filed suit in federal district court against the FS. In 2007, the district court entered summary judgment against ONRC. ONRC filed a notice of appeal. On September 4, 2007, the Court of Appeals upheld the FS on several counts, however, there were other points not upheld. Therefore, the FS began a DSEIS to rectify the shortcomings. The DSEIS comment period closed May 10, 2010; 850 comments were received. This is a highly charged issue in the Ashland community with strong support on both sides. Outside of the Ashland community, there is broad support for the expansion.

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